

**HOPE High School JROTC
Blue Wave Battalion
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Vietnam Veterans Essay

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When the question is asked, “What does my training and participation in JROTC mean to me?” I simply reply, “As a Hope High School junior who wants to be the best that I can be, every second of every day in the JROTC program is valuable, and an opportunity to grow.”

The JROTC program has given me a perspective on the core values to live by:

Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage.

Utilizing my learned leadership skills has allowed me to influence and motivate my team members. But it all began and was possible after I learned about myself in the first year of the program.

My participation in the program started off slowly during my freshman year. Only after I understood the value of the lessons, the opportunities outside the classroom, and how much the upperclassmen were committed to our goals, did my interest and desire grow. Throughout the process, the program led me through a personal and professional journey. I’ve internalized the lessons of leadership and realized that many times, motivating others is not easy. The motivating tactic, “setting the example,” is what I have strived for after being selected as the Cadet Battalion Commander in my junior year. I believe, through experience, I have realized that my personal success is tied directly to the success of the team.

Continuous improvement of the Hope High School Blue Wave Battalion is more than just a step

towards my career goal, it's my way of paying back for what I've been given.

I continue to strive for higher levels of knowledge and lessons, knowing that at times I will make mistakes. I believe that ultimately I will be a better leader and citizen by how I react to my shortcomings.

As my junior year comes to a close shortly, I realize that the program has given me a sense of purpose and accomplishment. I've accomplished many individual and team goals. Cadets who are committed can be depended upon no matter what the task. The team activity of rappelling, when a Cadet, 60 feet above the ground, knows when they yell, "on rappel," their battle buddy below, responding with, "on belay," has their back.

One of my goals as commander was to build a healthy culture so all Cadets believe they are part of the team. I aspire to lead through mutual respect and motivation rather than fear and intimidation. I learned quickly from previous examples that this tactic will ultimately fail. My awareness and perspective about leadership have been formed through experience and curriculum lessons. The classroom has pushed me to understand the process of higher education, soft skills, and the hard skill of leadership that JROTC enhances. My one definitive takeaway from my high school experience is that we are NOT future leaders, we are leaders NOW; leaders who are driven by self-motivation and not individual awards. Chasing awards doesn't provide lasting motivation, it is a by-product and evidence of it.

Motivation drove our academic, drill, color guard, marksmanship, and warrior athletic teams.

The extracurricular activities offered, provided the pathway towards my decision of enlisting in the National Guard. My foundation was first established in the classroom when each Cadet was assigned to set three Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely (S.M.A.R.T) goals that were short, mid, and long-term.

What's clear to me now, was impossible for me to imagine when I was given that task. Over two years later, I'm already on course to becoming a medical professional. Serving my country while establishing and accomplishing more goals means everything to me.

All Cadets are encouraged to reflect on their own goals and JROTC assists by providing a clearer path. All students have the opportunity to discover themselves through the program, and to push themselves to achieve even more. Personally, it's difficult to not appraise the program as anything short of life-changing for those who will take advantage of the opportunities.

Experiences from training and participating in JROTC have improved my quality of life. It has provided a foundation for a career path that has positively impacted the decisions I have made, created a bond with my teammates, and opened the door to many opportunities in the future.